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POEMS BY EDMOND HOLMES

I

THE SILENCE OF LOVE

MR. JOHN LANE

II

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

MR. JOHN LANE

III

THE CREED OF MY HEART AND OTHER POEMS

MESSRS. CONSTABLE AND CO. LTD.

IV

SONNETS TO THE UNIVERSE

MR. ARTHUR HUMPHREYS

V

POEMS: FIRST SERIES: 1873

OUT OF PRINT

VI

POEMS: SECOND SERIES: 1875

OUT OF PRINT

SONNETS AND POEMS BY EDMOND HOLMES

SELECTED AND ARRANGED
BY T. J. COBDEN-SANDERSON

AN
ANTHOLOGY

RICHARD
COBDEN-SANDERSON
THAVIES INN
1920

THE AUTHOR wishes to acknowledge with grateful thanks the permission given by Mr. John Lane to reprint Sonnets from The Silence of Love and The Triumph of Love; by Messrs. Constable and Co. to reprint The Creed of my Heart, To the Unknown God, The Secret of the Sea, and A True Tale of the Far West from The Creed of my Heart and other Poems; and by Mr. Arthur Humphreys to reprint six of the Sonnets to the Universe.

ADORATION has been from earliest days—the farthest in retrospect—a function of humanity, but the object has changed with the years. In Religion it has been God—in how many shapes! In Art, Beauty: in Science—its uses! To-day the object is split up into things innumerable. Who shall gather the separated rays into one glory infinite? Who or what? The transformed Science of the Universe—transformed into Vision, the Ecstasis of Cosmic Love, adorative and sympathetically creative? is that the coming æons' Divinity?

The Sonnets and Poems gathered together into this Anthology would seem to attempt an answer to this insurgent question, and with this tentative indication of their purpose and meaning they may be left to make their own appeal, direct to the reader.

T. J. COBDEN-SANDERSON

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DEDICATION

TO MY MISTRESS

WHEN shall I see thee, Dearest ! as thou art ?
  My light of life ! My guiding star ! My goal !
Mistress of all the pulsings of my heart !
    The yearnings of my soul !

Queen of the hopes, the prayers that burn in me !
  Fair nymph of earth ! Pure angel from above !
Vision of beauty !—while it dreamed of thee—
    My soul awoke to love.

When shall I see thee—not as now I watch
  A phantom form that beckons and is gone
Far down the avenue of years, or catch
    One glimpse that lures me on ?

For still I follow my imperious fate,
  As when of old, heart-whole and fancy free,
I vowed for evermore to consecrate
    My spirit's depths to thee.

Yet as a bee, that flits from flower to flower,
  To sip from each the honey of its kiss,
So have I courted for the passing hour
    Some form of transient bliss.

But light of wing the rover bee has flown :
  The sweets whereon he feasted fade forgot :
Fickle or false to these—to thee alone,
    My Queen ! I faltered not.

What if each charm beguiled me in its turn—
'Twas that each glimpse of glory or of grace
Told me of thee, and I aspired to learn
Of each thy hiding-place.

The hedgerow flowers, the poppies in the corn
Were twined about thy tresses—such my faith:
The fragrant freshness of the early morn
Breathed perfume of thy breath.

And every sound that swept my soul along
In waves of rapture, was a voice from thee—
The skylark's airy ecstasy of song—
The thunder of the sea.

And when—the storm clouds past—on blade and leaf
Fresh raindrops sparkled in the sudden glow,
I guessed that if thy soul could melt in grief,
Its tears would sparkle so.

And in the golden mist divinely bright,
Whose loveliness throbbed through the evening air
On sea and hill,—I saw the floating light,
The lit waves of thy hair.

Or if the purple of the sunset turned
The distant river to a rosy streak,
Methought thy beauty over-conscious burned
In blushes on thy cheek.

But ever, as I sought for thee in these,
I disenchanted each of its true charm,
That vanished, as the fairy moonlight flees
The daybreak in alarm.

The flowers drooped dead: the fragrance passed away:
Sweet sounds were hushed: the raindrops lost their light:
The gold, the purple of the setting day
Died into clouds of night.

And so I lost, because I loved so well
That love was thirst for a diviner love;
For things of earth must ever lose their spell,
That tell of things above.

All shapes, all tints that feed our hearts on bliss,
All moments of delight are thine; and thou
Hidden in each dost breathe an angel's kiss
On each unconscious brow.

But if desire to see thee face to face
Dawn on our hearts, those passing charms decay,
And, like a phantom from its lurking place,
Thy presence fades away.

For this—to know that thou art hiding there,
Veiled by thy very splendour from our eyes—
Turns our delight into an aching prayer,
Our laughter into sighs.

And though the veil be thin as sunlit rain,
Or bridal gauze that flutters snowy white,
Yet if we lift it overquick, we gain
Not thee—but empty night.

And once a bosom trembled against mine,
And dark eyes hid their beauty in a mist
Of overbrimming love : I thought that thine
Shone through them, and I kissed

With burning lips their brightness till they closed
Their lustre-fringèd lids, and kissed the brow
And coiling tresses till the head reposed
In ecstasy :—'twas thou !

Fond dream—but she, forgotten as I dreamed,
Waned from my arms into the empty air,
And on the darkness for an instant gleamed
The ripples of her hair.

And in their sunlit loveliness I knew
Thee, the enchantress, fading into gloom—
Revealed and hidden to bemock the view,—
My blessing and my doom.

For such thy wont : as each new change of form
Uplifts the transient veil thy features wore,
Swift, as the lightning streak against the storm,
Thou art and art no more.

Ah ! then the nearness of the light that waned
  Deepened the gloom that circled me forlorn,
And in thy stead a mocking voice remained
    Which laughed in bitter scorn :

O fool ! to deem that beauty the disguise
  Of visionary charms that slept in her,—
Could not the dreamy splendours of her eyes
    Content thee as they were ?

Not as the shadows of a hidden fire,
  But in themselves as stars of love and light :—
So had they deepened to thy soul's desire
    And been for ever bright.

Dupe of thine aspirations ! did it seem
  So slight a thing that throbbing human breast,
That thou couldst lose it for this airy dream,
    This endless empty quest ?

Not thine the voice that mocked me while I sighed,
  And not in vain through all the rolling years
Do I pursue thee, though the world deride
    My yearnings and my tears.

For light is breaking, light whose first dawn shows
  Only the dappled cloudlets grey and cold,—
But even now about the Orient grows
    A warmth, a tinge of gold.

And is it that thy beauty flits before,
Eastward and eastward to the springs of day,
And so for me who follow, more and more
The night mists melt away ?

Or—for at times the lightning of this thought
Flashes upon my vision—can it be
That all this seeking is the treasure sought,—
And thou this dream of thee ?

This parching thirst itself the hanging fruit—
This cruel strife the prize for which I bled—
The fever of this infinite pursuit
The phantom form that fled ?

And is the sea, to which all rivers roll,
The fountain head wherein their waves begin
Thyself the hidden firesprings of the soul—
The light that burns within ?

Then all this dawn of day is thy creation ;
My yearning is the thrill of thy embrace ;
And in the dream, the hope, the aspiration
I see thee face to face.

ODE
THE ATLANTIC MAIN

I

ODE ALL day we listened to a rising gale,
That drove the Atlantic billows more and more
Against the bulwarks of the stormy shore :
All day—but with the darkness came a sail—
Came angrier blasts of howling wind and hail :
And for a moment through the thunder roar
Of shivered waves the sweeping tempest bore,
With flakes of flying foam, one helpless wail.
Onward she comes to where the breakers boom,
On through the murky horror of the night—
On till one mountain mass of rolling doom,
One rushing ridge of Ocean glimmering white,
Deep in a cliff-girt bay of midnight gloom
Veils her in death for ever from our sight.

II

O land of solitude can I forget
How I have watched a sudden sheet of spray
Leap up triumphant on a stormy day
Above the cliffs, when wintry waves beset
A headland of despair, how I have met
Far inland—wanderers from their native home—
The flying feathers of your ocean foam,
And felt the rushing west wind, salt and wet
With driven mist :—but I remember most
How all one night, O melancholy land,
By lone Liscannor bay I could not sleep
For listening to the voices of the deep—
The tramplings of a never-ending host
Along the desolation of the sand.

III

No belt of shingle or of level sand
  Sunders the lines of the besieging host
  From the black bulwarks of the iron coast,—
The fortress walls of that beleaguered land:
Deep, deep at every tide the waters stand
  Beneath the ramparts, and in dense array
  Wave after wave breaks into seething spray
Against the stern resistance of the strand.
Yet inch by inch the stubborn barrier yields:
  Bear witness broken bays, and sullen roar
Of caverned waters, and ye pastured fields
  Of islets fronting the dissevered shore,—
For all unwearied the Atlantic wields
  The thunders of her onsets evermore.

IV

When evening came, I wandered on thy breast
  In fragile coracle—now sunk between
  Two overarching waves of glassy green,
Like sea bird floating in its stormy nest—
Now borne aloft upon a rolling crest
  I saw the shore's surf-beaten crescent sweep,
  And mid-sea purple of the rushing deep,
That darkened towards the splendour of the west.
Or I would guide my skiff amid the wrack
  Of shattered waves that overwhelm and hide
Duggerna's sunken rocks, then falling back
  Exhausted sink away on every side
In cataracts of foam—while bare and black
  The dripping reefs rise through the surging tide.

V

ODE Night comes and stars their wonted vigils keep
In soft unfathomable depths of sky :
In mystic veil of shadowy darkness lie
The infinite expanses of the deep,—
Save where the silvery paths of moonlight sleep,
And rise and sink for ever dreamily
With the majestic heaving of the sea.
Night comes and tenfold gloom where dark and steep
Into black waters of a land-locked bay
The cliffs descend ; there never tempest raves
To break the awful slumber : far below
Glimmer the foamy fringes white as snow ;
And sounds of strangled thunder rise alway,
And midnight moanings of imprisoned waves.

VI

The Shannon bore me to thy bosom wide :
I wandered with it on its winding way
By fields of yellow corn and new-mown hay,
And far blue hills that rose on either side,
And low dark woods that fringed the ebbing tide :
And ever as its waters neared the west,
Out of the slumber of its broadening breast
Faint momentary ripples rose and died ;—
And rose again before the breeze and grew
To wavelets dancing in the noonday light,
And these were changed to waves of ocean blue,
And creek and headland faded from the sight,
And oh ! at last—at last I floated free
On the long rollers of the open sea.

VII

Oh ! once again upon thy heaving breast
I floated, like a seabird when it braves
The shoreward onset of thy flowing waves,
And leaps triumphant on each rushing crest :
Round me in dark magnificent unrest
The billows of the wild Atlantic rolled
Far, far away, into the gates of gold,
The sunlit portals of the stormy west :
O never wearied ! In the hush of noon
Thy billows break the paths of golden sleep :
They break the dreamlike lustre of the moon :
Earth knows the hours of darkness : thou dost keep
Eternal vigil : still thy surges white
Flash through the deepest gloom of starless night.

VIII

Oh ! stay thy rollers for a moment's space,
I cannot live thy vast unquiet life ;
I cannot measure the exultant strife
Of waves that storm yon headland's dripping face :
My heart will break for yearning ; give it grace
To beat awhile more calmly, to renew
The lowlier life it led before it knew
The deep thrill of thine infinite embrace.
For 'tis my curse, that never tempest raves
But in my breast it finds its counterpart ;
The echoed thunder of thy caverned waves
Rolls through the deep recesses of my heart :
And tides of tyrant passion throb in me
To match thy pulsings, O imperial sea !

IX

ODE I gained the topmost height and looked below—
Listened and looked again : the billows spoke
With wonted voice of thunder as they broke,
Wave after wave with emerald light aglow,
And changed their crystal clearness for the snow
Of seething foam : deep in their depths were seen
Huge rocky fragments, giant gems of green :
And then I raised my eyes and looked, and lo !
From dim, dark southern headlands far away
To northern peaks of Achill's utmost isle,
And ever westward till the noonday smile
Veiled its horizon, the Atlantic lay—
One infinite expanse of deepest blue
That shamed the cloudless heaven's fainter hue.

X

Too deeply blue ! Too beautiful ! Too bright !
Oh ! that the shadow of a cloud might rest
Somewhere upon the splendour of thy breast
In momentary gloom : the molten light
That hides thy far horizon pains my sight :
Too crystal clear thy waves that heave below
O'er green rocks fathoms deep : the fringing snow
That girds thy headland cliffs is all too white.
So as I mused, a sudden turn revealed
The dungeon gloom of a cliff-circled bay,
Where the sad sea, whose wounds are never healed,
Makes moan of muffled thunder night and day,—
And awful shadows sleep, and all things seem
Dark and mysterious as an evil dream.

PROLOGUE
TO THE UNKNOWN GOD

PRO-
LOGUE

I

O GOD ! O Father of all things ! O Lord and Giver of life !
O fountain of peace and blessing ! O centre of storm and strife !
The waves of thy will roll onward : I stand alone on thy shore :
I veil mine eyes in thy presence : I seal my lips,—and adore.

II

Art thou not Force and Matter ? Art thou not Time and Space ?
Art thou not Life and Spirit ? Art thou not Love and Grace ?
Do not thy wings o'ershadow the whole and the humblest part ?
Are not the world's pulsations the ebb and flow of thy heart ?

III

O God ! O Father of all men ! O Lord of Heaven and Earth !
Shall we, who are dust before thee, exalt thy wisdom and worth ?
Shall we, whom thy life embraces, set forth thy life in our creeds ?
While the smoke of thy battle blinds us shall we read the scroll of thy deads ?

IV

We spin the threads of our fancy ; we weave the webs of our words ;
But nearer to truth and knowledge are the songs of the quiring birds.
The rays of thy golden glory fall free through our nets of thought :
And all that we seek is hidden : and all that we know is nought.

V

How shall I kneel before thee who hast no visible shrine ?
Is not the soul thy temple ? Is not the world divine ?
Will tower or transept tell me what the snow-clad mountains hide ?
Is the surging anthem holier than the murmur of ocean's tide ?

VI

To whom hast thou told thy secret ? On whom is thy grace poured out ?
Whose lamp will direct my goings ? Whose word will resolve my doubt ?
Shall I turn to the sects and churches that teach Mankind in thy name ?—
But the best is a mote in thy sunshine, a spark flung out from thy flame.

VII

Slowly through all my being streams up from each hidden root
The sap of thy life eternal,—streams up into flower and fruit.
Is this the truth that we dream of ? We seek what we ne'er shall know ;
But the stress of thy truth constrains us when the springs of thy love o'erflow.

VIII

At night, when the veil of darkness is drawn o'er the sunlit blue,
The stars come out in the heavens, the world grows wide on my view.
At night, when the earth is silent and the life-waves cease to roll,
The strains of a deeper music begin to wake in my soul.

IX

Is it then, O God ! that we know thee—when the darkness comes—is it then ?
When the surges of thought and passion die down in the hearts of men ?
Is it then that we hear thy message ? Is it then that we see thy light ?
Is the sound of thy voice our silence ? Is the sheen of thy face our night ?

SONNETS AND POEMS

PART I. SONNETS

THE SILENCE OF LOVE

PART I i. ii

WHEN first the light of thy belovèd eyes
Shone on my soul, its hidden fire awoke,—
A fire which smoulders low but never dies—
And brightly glowing from its embers broke :
First love, then hope, then yearnings strange and deep ;
Then, as to each the silent message came,
New thoughts, new aims, new powers arose from sleep,
Till all the mystic circle was aflame.
So in the springtime, when the south wind blows,
Warm with the sunshine of far tropic climes,
Kissing earth's slumb'rous eyelids as he goes,
Breathing of larger life and happier times,—
The drear dark land, a hundred leagues along,
Breaks into bud and leaf and light and song.

SOMETIMES in dreams I clasp thy breast to mine,
And kiss thy lips and with thy tresses play,
And through the floodgates of some outward sign
Pour all the passion of my heart away.
Sometimes in dreams I tell my secret so ;
Then wake to find that it is still untold,—
That still the surging, storm-fed waters flow,
By Fate's relentless ramparts still controlled.
O better thus,—better that passion's force,
Which love's impatient raptures had set free,
Pent in the prison of its channelled course,
Should give the river strength to reach the sea.
Better, for passion's sake, that passion's dream
Should fade forgotten with the morn's first gleam.

BY love must love be mastered, fire by fire,
Passion by passion. When the heart grows warm,
Its flame must quench the flame of its desire,
Its new-found strength must quell its gathering storm.
Not law, not duty, not the warning voice
Of saint or angel keeps love's compass true :
Reckless of Fate love makes its fateful choice :
To love alone is love's allegiance due.
Love's power alone can make love's passion pure :
Love's voice alone can bid love's tumult cease :
Love's pain alone can make love's bliss endure :
Love's fire alone brings to love's fever peace.
O love ! inflame my heart, and set it free
From every wild unhallowed dream of thee.

I ASKED the wind to tell my heart's unrest :
With frenzied blast the fierce autumnal gale
Rushed landward from its cloud-world in the west,—
Then died away with faint despairing wail.
I asked the sea : its billows shook the shore
With deafening boom,—then rocked themselves to sleep.
I asked the thunder ; but its crashing roar
Became at last a stillness dread and deep.
Faint voices all ! My love was still untold :
No storm could measure its tempestuous might :
Then in the heights above I saw unrolled
The calm majestic pageant of the night ;
And in its silence caught the only strain
That tells aright love's passion and love's pain.

PART I HAD no stern mandate held our lives apart—
v. vi No voice of doom foreboding grief and shame ;
Had all the fervent passion of my heart
Waked in thy heart a like contagious flame ;
Had life run smoothly ; had the Fates fulfilled
My every hope, my every dream and prayer ;
Had all that ardent love has ever willed
Been showered upon me without stint or care ;—
Could but one silent wish have brought me this,
Would I have breathed it ? O my soul rejoice ;—
To balance love against a lover's bliss—
God of His mercy spared thee this dread choice.
Does not love die—O dark and awful thought!—
Die of achieving all that it has sought ?

WHEN in the east the flowing tide of day
O'erwhelms the darkness with its flood of light,
My fears, my doubts, my sorrows melt away
With the last shadows of the dying night.
When in the flush of morn a sudden glow
Tells where the sun's bright banner is unfurled,
Watching the wonder of the dawn, I know
At last—at last—the secret of the world !
O mystic splendour all too soon withdrawn :
The sun ascends—the charm, the spell departs :
Oh well, thrice well, that love's eternal dawn
Still fires with hope our still expectant hearts :—
Well that its orb ne'er climbs the rim of earth :—
Well that its life is all a glorious birth.

IF love must die of gaining what it seeks,
Then must love seek what it may never gain ;
Then must love soar beyond our hours and weeks,
Beyond our suns that set, our moons that wane ;
Beyond our dreams of possible delight ;
Beyond bewitching beauty's fatal spell ;
Beyond imagination's eagle flight ;
Beyond the tolling of death's solemn bell ;—
Beyond all these, beyond all time and space,—
Till round the Universe it wings its way,
And circling back to thy belovèd face
Sees in thine eyes the dawn of a new day,—
Sees in the outpoured radiance of thy soul
The far-flashed light of its eternal goal.

SOMETIMES I long to send my soul afar ;
To widen self beyond self's utmost bound ;
To pass at will beyond the farthest star ;
To draw within me all that lies around.
Sometimes I long to make all life my own ;
To feel the whole world throbbing in my breast ;
To voice Eternity's deep undertone ;
To be the very pulse of God's unrest.
Strange yearning dreams—half-rapture and half-pain !
Titanic birth-throes of a life unborn !
Still caged in self I beat my wings in vain :
No breath of freedom comes, no gleam of morn ;—
Till, O Belovèd ! in my love of thee
I learn that love at last will set me free.

PART I STRONGER than life is death, for all things die.
ix. x Stronger than death is life, for death is nought.
Life,—what is life ? A flash that streaks the sky.
Death,—what is death ? A name, a haunting thought.
Stronger than life is death, for death subdues
Life's flaring torchlight with its argent rays.
Stronger than death is life, for life renews
Through death the firesprings of its vanished days.
Stronger than life is love, for love's warm breath
Kindles and keeps aglow life's myriad fires.
Stronger than death is love, for love through death
Kindles a larger life when life expires.
Life,—what is life ? Love's foreglow in the skies.
Death,—what is death ? Love dawning on our eyes.

NOT in the strength of duty but of love,
Not as Fate wills but as their comrades call,
The stars of midnight on their orbits move,
Each drawn to each, and all afire for all.
Blind that we are, we think they blindly sweep
Through voids of darkness, without guide or aim :
Yet all the Universe, from deep to deep,
Flashes and glows with love's ethereal flame.
Deaf that we are, we think that silence reigns
When midnight sends no message to our ears :
Yet all Creation echoes to the strains
Sung, at love's bidding, by the gliding spheres.
Silent and dark we deem it,—yet the night
Rings with love's music, quivers with love's light.

PART II. POEMS

i. A TRUE TALE OF THE FAR WEST
ii. STANDING STILL
iii. THE SAGE, THE POET, THE SAINT
iv. THE FIR WOOD
v. THE MESSAGE
vi. EVEN TO THE END
vii. WAITING FOR THE DAWN
viii. SUNSET AND SEA
ix. TO DEATH

PART II

i

THE rifles glittered in the sun,
All pointed at one human breast;
Eight rifles—but they rose like one,—
So well the line of death was dressed.

Who dressed it? Who on that dread day
Was captain of that stern-faced squad?
Who marshalled it in grim array
To wreak on man the wrath of God?

Who—but its victim? Proud he stood,
Proud and erect before them all,—
A thief, a murderer, wild and rude,
Doomed by their vengeful hands to fall.

Plunder and murder—such his crime,
A crime which death alone could purge:
Swift was his judgment; short the time
Allowed him on life's dizzy verge.

He laughed at death,—but death's disgrace!
To die the felon's death of shame!
A sudden horror flushed his face,
And swept through all his veins like flame.

His aged mother far away:—
The gibbet! No! For her dear sake
Prone on the earth he'd kneel and pray:
Were *that* his doom, her heart would break.

Prone, humbled, at his captors' feet
He knelt, he prayed with eager breath—
Chide not his whim—that he might meet
A soldier's, not a felon's death.

His boon was granted. Up he sprang
Inspired, impassioned. Pride and joy
Glowed in his face. He danced and sang,
Light-hearted as a careless boy.

Then facing death he took his stand.
The rifles rose. Too low! Too high!
He called impatient, as he scanned
The muzzles with a critic's eye.

Look, boys! he cried, my heart is here,
And on his heart his hand he laid—
His beating heart that knew no fear—
Too full of joy to feel afraid.

Here is your mark; take careful aim;
There! Steady! So! He bared his head.
Forth leaped a sheet of blinding flame;
And every bullet struck him dead.

PART II
ii

GOD be praised that I stand at last
Facing the enemy, rifle in hand :
Hist ! how the bullets whistle past—
And still we wait the word of command,
Though our fellows are dropping fast.

When will it be my turn, I wonder :
Where and how am I doomed to die ?
Will a sword-blade cleave my skull asunder,
Or a lightning-flash from a battery
Strike me dead ere I hear its thunder ?

Will one of those whistling bullets bring
The message of doom, or, worse than all,
Will a crashing shell leap in and fling
Fragments of death, or shall I fall
Where bayonets clash and ring ?

Or is it a boon too precious by far—
Too blest a fate—to die as I stand—
Death 'mid the press and clamour of war—
Death red and hot for the motherland—
For the land where the dear ones are ?

Mother of nations ! Mother of men !
I drank in life at thy Titan breast :
Thine arms of love were around me then,
And if ever I muse how my birth was blest
I am clasped to thy heart again.

Mistress of empires ! Queen of the sea !
  The pulse of a strong exultant hope
Beats in thy breast till it beats in me :
  Thou hast given my life an unbounded scope :
I am proud in the pride of thee.

I reap the fruit of the toil and tears,
  Of the deeds of heroes that made thee great,
Of the travail throes of a thousand years,
  Of the patient courage that conquered fate,
Of doubts and despairing fears.

Each drop of blood that thy children shed—
  Each spasm of pain that broke their breath—
For me they suffered—for me they bled :—
  O mother's love, I am dumb till death :
I could speak were I cold and dead.

Thou knowest how often I strove to break
  The fetters of speech for a moment's space :—
How love grew a thirst that I yearned to slake—
  How I prayed that Heaven would grant me grace
To strike one blow for thy sake.

One blow for England—however light—
  One drop in the stream of her ample life—
One breaking bubble—one foam-bell white
  In one of those whirlpools of eddying strife
That mark her resistless might.

PART II
ii

And here I stand—and the fates fulfil
My heart's one wish—my devoutest prayer :
I am standing obedient to England's will :—
Not mine to ask how my comrades fare :—
She has bidden me stand here still.

I murmur not : I am more than blest :
She has found me a foot of earth to defend :
She has marked me the way I may serve her best :
She judges the issue : she knows the end :—
Mine to work—be the meaning unguessed.

So little a work—but I thank God most
For this—that the issue itself is large—
That all may serve it, and none may boast :
The pulse beats high in a cavalry charge—
Is it nothing to hold one's post—

When shells are screaming to left and right ?
When grape is falling in scathing showers ?
I stand here still with as stern delight,
As ever in fierce exultant hours
Bade hearts beat fast for the fight.

Mother of nations ! and if I fell
I dare to dream that thy love would spare
A sigh—it may be a tear ; ah ! well,
I hear the voice that accepts my prayer
In the scream of the passing shell.

I

THEY stand with their hands outstretched in love of a far-off shore— PART II iii
The glow of evening around them, and a burning light before—
They gaze where the sun is setting, and the Ocean waves are rolled,
And their hearts are fain to follow that pathway of reddening gold.

II

They stand and gaze till their faces have caught the reflected glow,
And a mystic brightness is shed o'er the things of the earth below,
When they look away from the Heaven; and they cannot see aright,
For it may be their eyes are dazzled by the flood of immortal light.

III

In their hearts there is utter yearning—a thirst that is never slaked,—
A love that can have no dying—no creature of Death awaked.
And these have the grace to tread where none but their feet have trod;
And could they but see their goal, they would know that their goal is God.

IV

One end to their endless longing—one aim amid all their strife,
But the end is itself the way, and the aim is the whole of life :
The Sage—the Poet—the Saint—we have given to each his name—
But if they have all one goal, then all are at last the same.

V

For we speak and we needs must speak of mind and heart and soul ;
But Spirit is ever One and an undivided Whole :
We look but a little way—the part can see but a part—
And only Thyself—O God ! canst see Thyself as Thou art.

VI

The Sage—Ah ! we know a little of our little things below,—
But his is the restless striving of the mind, that knows, to know :
He asks what is ? and in asking his hands have broken the bond
Of what seems—and he presses on to the one I AM beyond.

VII

His God is the God of Truth, Eternal and far and dim, PART II
And he knows not that in his striving God has come iii
near to him ;
He calls us, but who may follow—for whose are the
eyes to view
The blinding beams of the sun in his heaven of endless
blue ?

VIII

The Poet—his eyes are burning—his heart is a heart
of fire :
His hands have fashioned the world by the light of
his own desire :
He will not tarry for knowledge—too quickly the
moments flee,—
And his is the passionate longing of the heart, that
sees, to see.

IX

His God is the God of Beauty—so near, could he only
find,—
He sees where no others see, yet even his eyes are
blind :
We praise him, and start to follow, but the light of
the heart has fled,
And vainly we look around us, for the world lies dark
and dead.

x

PART II iii But the Saint—his eyes are ever upturned to the blue above,
And his is the endless yearning of the soul, that loves, to love :
He looks at the clear deep Heaven, whose cloudless depths may tell
Of the pure and selfless Spirit where God loves best to dwell.

xi

His God is the God of Love—so far, yet so deep within,—
Whom a life of longing and loving and losing self may win :
He leads us, and all would follow—but we linger from day to day,
And think there is time for starting, and so life glides away.

THIS is the fir wood : once again,
With muffled step and voice subdued,
I wander through its wide domain
Of cool, dark, silent solitude ;
And hear once more that sound I love,
The tree-tops whispering above.

There are the fir-stems bare and red,—
The tapering crests of dusky green,
With branches blending overhead—
The little plots of light between,
Where sapling fir-trees court the view
Clad in a fresher, tenderer hue.

And still the bladeless ground beneath
Is dry and dusty, saving where
Patches of green unwrinkled heath
Make all around more parched and bare :
The hollows—each in winter-tide
A dark brown pool—are now half dried.

There is the little open glade—
The sunny lawn—the cottage bright—
The fruit-trees smilingly arrayed
In clouds of mingling pink and white,
Whene'er, as now, May breezes bring
Their happy wealth of blossoming.

PART II
iv

Ay—as of old—yon little isle
Of lawn and fruit-trees has its place,
Sweet as a momentary smile
Upon a sadly thoughtful face :
So seems it 'mid the gloom profound
Of sombre wood that laps it round.

How little change has here been wrought
By lapse of time or hand of man,
Since when in bygone days I sought
These solemn haunts, and first began
To learn, what I have learnt so well,
The strength of their mysterious spell.

And yet when first through heath and fern
I wandered free, I had not come
To listen to that voice and learn,—
For me the solitudes were dumb,—
I only came to be away
From all the life and light of day.

I knew the meadows near the mill,
I knew the little stream that wound
Under its bushes dark and still,
I knew the rushing mill-weir's sound ;
I knew the common and its trees
That rustled crisply in the breeze.

I knew what flowers were oftenest seen
  In spring-time near the brooklet's edge ;
I knew the many shades of green
  That smiled on tree and bush and hedge ;
I knew the summer evening glow,
When showers were past, the sun sunk low.

I knew the many mingled notes
  On dewy morns and scented eves,
That came from happy feathered throats
  Deep-hidden in their world of leaves ;—
Wood, stream, and meadow all were known,
And oft I wandered there alone.

I came companionless to solve
  Deep problems that possessed my brain,
Ambitious projects to revolve,
  To disentwine thought's tangled skein ;—
But harmonies of sound and hue
Enchained my ear and charmed my view.

They spoke to me, and I replied,
  They wrung responses from my soul ;
They made new channels for the tide,
  That I had laboured to control ;
They drew it downwards from its springs
In mazy trackless wanderings.

PART II
iv

They ruled the motions of my thought
In strange and ever-shifting mood,
And then I fled from them and sought
The shelter of this lonely wood.
Where all was dark and same and still,
And I could guide my thoughts at will.

With head bowed low and aimless feet,
Folded in thought I wandered on :
The varied influences sweet
That had distracted me were gone ;
But in their stead some mightier force
Had seized my mind and shaped its course.

All differences of changing form,
All interplay of shade and light,
Sunshine and darkness, calm and storm,
Were overpowered and lost to sight ;
My baffling problems, daring schemes,
Were idle as forgotten dreams.

I paused awhile, and ceased to think ;
I heard the murmur overhead ;
Deep, deep its subtle power did sink
Into my inner depths, and fed
My vision, and enlarged its scope
Beyond all range of fear or hope.

The world had faded far away ;
  I had no need to laugh or weep ;
Damp on my cheek I felt the spray ;
  I heard the moaning of the deep ;
I stood alone upon life's shore
And caught a voice unheard before.

No clouds were dark, no sunlight gleamed,—
  I only saw the wide grey sea ;
And gazing over it, I seemed
  To face my own eternity ;
Deep in my soul I seemed to hear
A whisper from another sphere.

Oh ! thou, whose heart is scarred and worn,
  Whom plans bewilder, cares oppress,—
By disappointment overborne,
  Or overjoyed at earth's success,—
The fir woods call to thee to come,
Their lonely depths are never dumb.

For there is never day so still,
  So lulled to sleep, but some light breeze,
Unnoticed else, doth faintly fill
  The topmost foliage of the trees,
And those tall tapering crests are stirred,
And the eternal whisper heard.

PART II
iv

And there is never day so rude,
So vexed with blasts that howl and drive,
But in this dark and silent wood
The winds are hushed, or only give—
Howe'er the tree-tops rock and swing—
Depth to their solemn murmuring.

And in that murmur hushed and deep,
To thee, who hearest, it will seem
That thou art strangely wrapped in sleep,
Even as one who in a dream
Knows that he dreams, yet cannot break
The fetters of his sleep and wake.

And all wherewith the years are rife,—
The varied play of broken thought,
This painted world, this chequered life,—
Will seem to thee a thing of nought,
A drop in the unmeasured sea,
An atom in Eternity.

PART II
v

THE moon is hid to-night behind dark masses
Of gathered clouds, heavy with coming rain :
Drear is the wind—each fitful gust that passes
Moans as it were in pain.

Is it in pain ? Those shades of grief or gladness
Are the outgoing of the heart within :
Man's spirit builds up Nature, and his sadness
Must needs be woven in.

She only weeps when human hearts are weeping,
She only smiles when human eyes are bright,
She must lie dead when man, her life, is sleeping,—
As now in the dark night—

So dark—I cannot see the river-meadows,
Save at those moments when the drifting clouds
Leave the moon bare, and white, amid dark shadows,
Glimmer the dead earth's shrouds.

Till once again the vault of heaven closes,
And those pale burial-clothes are no more seen :
Wrapt in so deep a darkness she reposes,
She needs no other screen.

I cannot see the rushes by the river,
As in the cold night-wind they bend and wave,
But I can hear them—how they moan and shiver,
Like grasses on a grave.

PART II I cannot see the eager eddying tide
v Sweep 'neath the arches of the old grey bridge,
But I can hear its murmuring waters glide,
Kissing each wave-worn ledge.

Dear river, pause a moment in thy going,
Thy ceaseless downward going—pause and stay;
Yet do not pause—for art thou not thy flowing?
Flow on then, flow away.

For ever flowing, thou art ever near me;
Each drop sweeps onward—thou art still beneath;
I will bend over then, and thou shalt hear me,
While all around is death,—

Death and great stillness—only we are living,
I am awake to be awake with thee;
So, for my love a like requital giving,
Hearken awhile to me.

For well I love thee—well, how well thou knowest—
Have I not been with thee, and traced thy course,
Even where first a little brook thou flowest,
Down from thy woodland source,

Till other streams, that each has its pretence
To bear thy name, their tribute-waters bring,
And hush for aye their babbling vehemence
In thy deep murmuring.

And then broad barges float upon thy breast,
  And old brown hamlets on thy brink arise,
And, mirrored in thy wave, grey church-towers rest
    Against the blue, deep skies.

I know the meadows where tall Kempsford's tower
  Woos thee to linger near it for awhile
In slow meanderings—I know its power
    To tempt and to beguile.

And I know Lechlade's spire, and Highworth's ridge,
  And I have floated with thee where thy tide
Sweeps in swift eddies under Radcot Bridge,
    And followed thee, my guide,

Where distant Bampton Steeple rises high,
  The only object that the eye can gain,
To break the desolate monotony
    Of that dim northward plain;

While southward here and there a homestead stands,
  Its blue smoke curling up from some far hill,
Whose slopes sink down to these low meadow-lands,
    That are for ever still,

Save when the ringing of the whetted scythe
  Startles the silence of their solitudes:
And thou hast borne me past lone Bablockhythe,—
    Past the sweet Wytham woods,

PART II Into that valley in whose bosom sleep
v Grey tower, and mouldering wall, and climbing spire,
And court and grove and cloister nestling deep,—
While lingering with desire,

Or hushed in reverence, thy waters move
Softly and noiselessly—so sweet the spell
Of peace and beauty and unuttered love—
How sweet my heart knows well.

And all thy after-course—do I not know [current,
Each bridge whose grey piers stem thine eddying
Each weir through which thy pent-up waters flow
A broken foaming torrent?

Each humble hamlet church—each red-roofed town—
Each little inn nestling in quiet shade—
Each old ancestral mansion looking down
Through lawn and wooded glade?

I know them well, and well each upland fallow
With its slow slope, and well each wooded steep,
Each shoaly bank whereon thy stream runs shallow,
Each pool where it is deep.

I know the month when thy green meads are golden
With marigolds and cowslips,—when thy dells
Are spreading their blue carpets unbeholden—
Blue carpets of blue-bells.

I know the season when thy hanging woods
Are glorious with rich autumnal hues,
Set 'mid dark pines that know no changing moods,
Whose leaf no season strews.

For there's a time too when those woods are bare,
And brown, and bleak, and thy stream runs below
Swollen and dark, or darker from the glare
Of newly fallen snow,

That finds a home upon the neighbouring fields,
And just begins to make the brown woods white,
But settling on thy bosom only yields
A drop to swell its might.

Yet even at that season when thou art
So deep, and dark, and pitiless, and strong,
Thou hast a beauty that can reach my heart,
And make it yearn and long,—

Long with a vast unutterable longing
For a dim something far and unattained,
A something that my thought is ever wronging,
Thinking it may be gained.

Yet did it not, where were this endless striving—
This reaching on which is life's only light—
This journeying where there is no arriving—
The fierceness of this fight

That never ends in victory or quiet—
Its victory is its own continuing—
Its being without end—no haven nigh it,
Where it may fold its wing.

Peace—peace—I am abroad and far away,
Yet in my farness thou art near to me;
All that is in me—all I cannot say—
Finds utterance in thee.

Thou and this night and this cold moaning wind,
And all this darkness and weird loneliness,
Are the reflection of mine inmost mind,
And are it and express

Its pantings and dumb yearnings—Woe is me!
My poor weak words are baffled and sink back;
Thought hides from them in light they cannot see,
Through paths they cannot track.

So they shall tell of other simpler things
With calmer, tenderer utterance, and crave
A humble boon, and in its murmurings
Hear thine assenting wave.

There is a spot a hundred miles from here,—
Stay—I will whisper where, and thou shalt know
Which is thy dearest nook, where all are dear,—
A little space below

Thy downward stream first meets the rising tide,
  The salt sea's messenger, whom twice each day
She bids flow up and bear thee to her side,
    And chide thy long delay.

There dwells one there who loves thee even as I,
  And often wanders by thy bank, and knows
Each bough that shades thee from the summer sky,
    Each flower that near thee grows.

She has drunk in thy beauty ; she has lent
  In sweet humility a listening ear
To thy pure language, fondly eloquent
    To those whose hearts can hear.

Thy spirit is in her and has become
  A portion of her being, as of mine ;
Through thee we commune when our lips are dumb,
    Through thee we intertwine

Our lives in one embrace ! Ah River blest !
  Thy tranquil charms were ever strong to stir
My heart to love thee, but I love thee best
    That thou art dear to her :—

And oh ! to whom but thee, descending River,
  Shall I commit the message of my heart ?
To her I dare not—for my voice would quiver,
    And sudden mists would start

PART II To eyes long tearless : and the words would fail
v That rise from depths of feelings too intense
For light of speech, and nought would tell my tale
But the mute eloquence

Of dim tear-clouded eyes that cannot weep :
But I can speak to thee, and thou canst hear,
And stay thy waters gliding half-asleep
Far hence, if she be near,—

And with soft lispings tell my message sweet,
Kissing the shore she treads on ; ah, how blest
So to be near her, kneeling at her feet
With a whole love confest :

Yet is my heart half fearful to entrust
To thee its secret, for it might be so
That, as I spoke, some wild and wandering gust
Might hear, though soft and low

The words were whispered, and so hearing fly
Into the dark void of the midnight air
With mocking laughter, or sad shivering sigh,
Or moaning of despair.

Thyself shalt be my message downward flowing
In thy calm loveliness—thy glassy tide—
Thy meadows green—the shady alders growing,
The willows by thy side ;

And the sweet scent on steamy, summer eves
  Of new-mown hay, blent with the faint fresh smell
Of broken water, where the blade upheaves,
    Or foamy wavelets swell;

The roar of distant weirs, the lazy plash
  Of oars plied languidly on current strong,
The gentle rippling murmur from the wash
    Of boats that speed along;

Thy little islets, and the heavenly glow
  On unmown grass and hanging foliage shed,
Divinely sweet what time the sun is low
    With dark clouds overhead:

All these shall be as words from me to her,
  Richer with meaning than my truest words,—
For if they mould her being, if they stir
    Her deepest strongest chords,

Filling her heart with pure tranquillity,
  With silent yearning and unending love,
Waking in her the thoughts they wake in me,
    Lifting her eyes above,

As they have pointed mine—what force of speech
  Could be a bond so potent as thou art
To wed us soul to soul, link each to each
    In harmony of heart?

PART II Dear river, then, flow downwards—haste below ;
v My love dwells there, why linger here above ?
Flow on my tender message, sweetly flow,
My message to my love.

LOVE, when the day is wellnigh spent,
When the long shadows, dark and chill,
Steal slowly on till they are blent
Into one shade, and the dim sight
Waits for that deeper gloom of night,
When all is cold, and dead, and still;

When the last dying purple gleam
Melts into darkness, while above
The pale moon, hanging like a dream,
Grows into life, and star by star
From its eternal world afar,
Comes out in grandeur, not in love,

For warmth and life are fading fast;—
Dearest! wilt thou be with me then
To that great moment, first and last,
When darkness ends the dying day,
And the loosed spirit is away
Into wide worlds beyond its ken?

Wilt thou be with me then as now?—
For if that end be agony,
Thou must be near to cool my brow,
And lull its pain with thy soft kiss:
And Dearest! if the end be bliss,
I shall have sorer need of thee:

PART II
vi

For what is bliss where thou art not ?
But if the cruel mists should come,
And thy sweet face should be forgot
By vacant eyes,—yet do not go,
But watch the heart's faint ebb and flow,
Till it has grown for ever dumb.

For there might come one moment's grace,
When, as the dying eyes reposed,
Suddenly they would know thy face
And be lit up with endless love,
And even the dying lips might move
To breathe one kiss before they closed.

So thou wilt sit beside my bed,
And take my wasted hand in thine,
And say soft words, or lean thine head—
Where the great eyes have still their light,
And the long hair is brown and bright—
Upon the pillow, close to mine.

While near and nearer grows the end,
And the damp chill mists gather fast,
And roll and mingle, till they send
That moment of intensest night—
That darkness of Eternal Light—
And—God has come to me at last.

Dearest ! I often think that there
Just through that darkness thou wilt be :
Though a long after-life of care
Be thine—yet Time itself is dead,
And all thy years for me are fled
In that one instant's agony.

I know not—but if this be so,
The tears of sorrowing are thine,
Only for me they must not flow—
Love ! as I love thee, I would pray
That Heaven would take thee first away
And all the pain of life be mine.

PART II
vii

I SAID, Mama is going home
To God's home in the bright blue sky :
She wants her little ones to come
And kiss her—and then say good-bye.

The children wondering what I meant
Looked up—my eyes were far away :
They put their hands in mine, and went
To where their dying mother lay.

Their rosy lips gave, each in turn,
Warm kisses to the cold white brow :
I saw her eyes light up and yearn—
I see them lit and yearning now.

The children went away to bed,
And on each pillow snowy white
A ruddy cheek—a curly head
Nestled in slumber all the night.

And I was in the room of death
Alone—alone—the long hours through :
I watched the gently taken breath
Grow faint and faint as falling dew.

At length there came a change—a chill,
That drew a shiver from the earth,
A shiver of wind—then all was still—
I waited for the daylight's birth.

A ghastly glimmer of the dawn,
  Sadder than darkness, filled the room :
The veil was lifted—not withdrawn ;
  I saw enough to see the gloom.

I took in mine the wasted hand,
  And sank upon my knees in prayer,
The while with dreamy eyes I scanned
  The large blue veins that wandered there.

Till something seemed to whisper, Rise—
  I rose in haste, and bending o'er
The pillow, sought the sweet blue eyes
  Where life's warm sparkle played no more.

Yet love shone through them—love that gains
  Intensity when force is spent ;
Infinite in its very chains,
  And in its dumbness eloquent.

For never is the sun so bright
  As then when evening clouds eclipse,
Nor love so fair as when her light
  Burns through the veil of speechless lips.

O speechless lips, I saw you move
  To make a kiss, but death forbade :
You told your agony of love,
  Although the kiss was never made.

PART II
vii

For unperceived death's shadowy mist
Came lightly gliding in between
Our yearning souls, and as I kissed
The lips, I touched the icy screen.

And in that touch a chilling wave
Of wintry breath, that crept and stole,
Like nightwind moaning o'er a grave,
Curdled the stillness of my soul.

I dared not name or shape in thought
The sickening doubt—the formless dread ;
Half aimlessly I rose and sought
The window-pane—the sky was dead :

Clouds hung against it, wan and dim
And lifeless as my darling's cheek ;
But just along the eastern rim
There ran a faintly golden streak.

PART II
viii

THE river flows down to the sunset :
The river flows down to the sea ;
But just where the sunset is brightest,
The river has ended for me.
Where the earth and the heaven are mingled
In rapture of radiant rest,
And the breadth of the brimming waters
Lies lost in the burning west.

Yet afar in the hidden distance,
Beyond the immortal light,
The stream with its weary windings
Must wander on through the night—
Must wander on till the daybreak
Dawns desolate and forlorn,
And the waters mirror only
The wan white clouds of morn.

And the stream of your days, my darling,
Flows down to one ardent hour,
When the sunlight of love descended
On earth in a golden shower :—
Golden as Hope in the heaven,
Stainless of doubts or fears ;—
Ah ! now it is red and burning
Through the mists of memory's tears.

PART II
viii

The river flowed out of the sunlight;
  The river is flowing for aye:—
I know not if white mists haunt it:
  I know not if clouds are grey.
For me it has stayed its waters
  In the gates of the golden sky:
It died in the sun's embraces,
  And it lived, and it cannot die.

For life is a stream to the ocean
  Of passionate inward peace,
And in each true moment of Heaven
  The waves of our wandering cease.
Each pulse of joy is the throbbing
  Of tides of the shoreless sea,
And there they are met together—
  This life and the life to be.

COME when the chill breeze shivers
  At the grey cold dawning of day :
Come when the sunset glory
  Is fading faintly away :
Come in the depths of midnight,
  Come in the blaze of noon,
Come in the glimmer of starlight,
  Come to me soon—oh ! soon.

Come with thy stillness and slumber ;
  I am weary of drawing breath ;
Come with thy deep, dread darkness,
  Come to me sweet, sweet Death.

Come when the frosts are loosened
  By the magic touch of spring,
And I wait for the far-off May-time
  With its budding, and blossoming.
Come when the summer meadows
  Are scented, and warm, and bright,
And I watch how the shadows lengthen,
  And know it will soon be night.

PART II
ix

Come when the soaking showers
  Weep through the autumn woods,
And I think how the flowers have faded
  That laughed in those solitudes.
Come when the blasts of winter
  Are bleak, and piercing, and cold,
And tell of some frozen sorrow
  Deep-hidden, unwept, untold.

Come to me grey and endless ;
  I am weary of drawing breath ;
Unchanged with the changing seasons,
  Draw near to me quiet Death.

Come when my blood is fevered
  With the frenzy, and whirl, and rush,
Where the weak are swept with the current,
  And trampled down in the crush.
Come when my brain is wearied
  Of thinking its riddle out,
And baffled, and mocked, and wildered,
  And meshed in a maze of doubt.

Come when my heart is tired
  Of chasing the phantom light,
That is still behind and before it,
  And beckons and fades from sight.
Come when my soul is bleeding
  That wanders in search of God,
And torn by the clinging briars,
  And bruised by the chastening rod.

Come to me, calm me, cool me ;
  I am weary of drawing breath ;
Kiss my brow till it aches no longer,
  Be kind to me, gentle Death.

Come most to me when Love falters,
  When heaven's own brightness pales,
When the fire on the holiest altars
  Burns low, and flickers, and fails.
Oh ! come to me then, come quickly ;
  I am weary of drawing breath ;
Oh ! fold me, clasp me, and take me,
  I have need of thee, dear, dark Death.

PART III. SONNETS
THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

PART III O LOVE, that ever wooed art never won,—
i. ii While thou wast yet a dream, I knew thy light,
Streaming from Heaven, had kindled star and sun,
And that beyond thee all was death and night.
Now thou art near : my brow has felt thy kiss ;
My bosom beats obedient to thy will ;
Thy flame enfolds me :—yet a dread abyss,
A gulf of doom holds us asunder still.
And dreaming of thy face, which none may see,
With prayer and hope I sought life's only prize ;
But now thy face, with its epiphany
Of more than beauty, blinds my dazzled eyes,—
And, far beyond the reach of hope or prayer,
Bids me pursue it with my heart's despair.

YET is it well that thou art still a dream,
A dear desire, a message from afar,
A name that haunts my thought, a wayward gleam
Of tremulous light, a ray from some lone star ;—
And well it is that I may never guess
Thy heart's profoundest secret, never know
What hidden flame inspires thy loveliness,
What tides of passion bear thee to and fro :—
And well that in the temple of my heart
Despair hath built a shrine where, night and day,
Love's votive lamp reveals thee as thou art,
And scares profaning hopes and prayers away !
For love that lives in love's delight must die,
But love's despair is love's eternity.

O FLAMES of passion, will ye never die,
That trampled into dust anon revive,
And wrap my heart in fire and stream on high ?—
O rebel flames, die down and ye shall live.
Ay, ye shall burn more bravely than of old,
Fed by the fuel of love's self-control,—
Burn till your fiercer heat seems pale and cold,
Burn in the furnace of love's inmost soul.
Ay, ye shall burn, when love has quenched your fire,
Burn on for aye, triumphant in your death ;
For, as your tempest-driven waves expire,
They wake again, lit by love's purer breath ;—
Wake to new life, though lost to mortal sight,
In love's white flame, in love's transcendent light.

I DREAMED, Belovèd, that I heard thy voice
Saying, Thy love shall have its due reward :
Take what thy heart desires : be thine the choice :
No gulf divides us now, no flaming sword.
Then didst thou proffer me love's cup of bliss,
With gracious words that haunt my memory still,—
O love, for love's dear sake I bring thee this :
Drink, if thou must ; thy love shall have its will.
But as I heard thy voice and felt thy touch,
Love's purest wave surged upward to its flood,
Matching the love that made thee give so much,
Quenching with joy the fever in my blood :—
O love, I cried, no wine of earth can slake
The thirst for thee which thy fond words awake.

PART III v. vi

WHAT is despair ? Perhaps a larger hope,
Which looks beyond the range of mortal eyes,
And strives, impatient of earth's narrow scope,
To wrest from failure what success denies.
What is despair ? Perhaps a deeper joy,
Deeper than heart desires—a golden morn,
The pale approaches of whose light destroy
Life's wonted joys, and leave our hearts forlorn.
What is despair ? Perhaps a purer love,
Purer than earth can kindle or sustain,—
A love that soars into the realms above,
And soaring seeks what it may never gain.
Oh more than hope, oh more than joy to me,
Oh more than love is my despair of thee.

AS one who, wandering in a pathless dream,
Scans his own doings with another's eye,
So, when I muse upon my past, I deem
'Tis mine no more, and doubt if I am I.
Love ! was it I who through those weary years
Waited unwearied till love's morning broke ?
Love ! was it I who heard with ravished ears
Love's voice in thine, and at his call awoke ?
What is my self ? A river gliding past,
With ever-widening flood, from source to sea.
O sea to which all rivers glide at last,
I am not I till I am lost in thee ;—
I am not I till, freed from self's control,
I cease to be, and love absorbs my soul.

THINK the world will ne'er be wide enough
or the free flight of love's aspiring wings ;
think that heaven and earth are but the stuff
Vhence love doth weave his dreams of lovelier things ;
think that shining star and burning sun
re motes that wander in love's stream of light ;
hat all would perish, if love's goal were won,
heir fire extinct, in pathless gulfs of night.
my lost love ! O beauty past desire !
prize that heart may never hope to gain !
it not well that still, from fire to fire,
rom deep to deep, love seeks thee,—but in vain ?
it not well that love should woo thee so,
nd through life's failure keep life's torch aglow ?

O more, Belovèd, must we meet no more ?
o more make fond exchange of word and thought ?
as love made shipwreck on despair's bleak shore ?
life a failure ? Are the dead years nought ?
ought—O my queen ? Nay, there's no cloud so black
ut it will break at last and fade away ;
nd I shall yet summon the dead years back,
nd weave them all into one timeless day.
or love will guide me through the night of death
nto the land where love-worn souls find rest,
reaming at will, while life renews its breath,—
reaming the dream of love that each loves best :—
here at my will the Past shall live again,
nd reap as rapture what it sowed as pain.

PART III ix

WHEN, in the solemn stillness of the night,
My musing soul is filled with love of thee,
I seem to stand upon the world's last height,
The flaming rampart of all things that be.
And as I pause upon that lonely verge,
And plunge my gaze into the gulf below,
I see the cosmic billows sweep and surge
From death to life, with endless ebb and flow.
But howsoever deep my thought may sink
Into that well of darkness and of fire,
And howsoever deep my soul may drink
Of light and life and wonder and desire,—
Love still remains,—the love that thou hast waked—
Its deeps unfathomed and its thirst unslaked.

PART IV. POEMS

i. CHILDHOOD'S HOME
ii. THE STEPPING-STONES
iii. ON THE MOORS
iv. VOICES OF AUTUMN
v. ON SNOWDON
vi. ON THE YORKSHIRE COAST
vii. THE SECRET OF THE SEA

I

PART IV I PASSED through the open gateway and under the
i bending trees :
The boughs of the stooping beeches stirred in the summer breeze :
The branching shadows fluttered as asleep on the lawn they lay :
And up through the sunny meadow the avenue wound its way.

II

I passed through the open gateway, and I was a child again :
The grass and the leaves were sparkling in jewels of last night's rain :
But lo ! a turn in the pathway clouded my eyes with tears,
And I stood and gazed in rapture on the home of my early years.

III

The same—and yet I marvelled, for surely of old it stood
Fronting a boundless meadow,—on the skirts of a sombre wood,—
With a stately hill behind it, from whose height I used to gaze
To where the horizon bounded the world of my childish days.

IV

But the hill was a little hillock—the wood was a little grove : PART IV i
'Twas only a little paddock through which I loved to rove :
I climbed, but the wizard fancy had somewhere lost his wand :
I looked to the far horizon, but the whole world lay beyond.

V

Yet the grass had its wonted verdure—the sun had its wonted gold—
The raindrops trembled and sparkled, as ever in days of old :
And clouds were ne'er more fleecy, and never a fresher breeze
Passed with a crisper murmur through depths of the greenwood trees.

VI

And I wondered if one of the dear ones, who left us and went his way
Into the kingdom of twilight, misty and cold and grey,
Could rise from the depths of silence and come for a little while,
And hear the breezes rustle and see the green earth smile ;—

VII

PART IV i Would the earth he had left behind him—the earth he had loved so well—
That once was higher than heaven, and deeper than depths of hell—
Seem now but a mote in the sunbeam, a drop in the water race,
Its life the pulse of a moment—a foothold its orb of space ?

VIII

Would he learn that its ancient limits, now grown so narrow and near,
Had veiled from imagination the skirts of a boundless sphere ?
Would he look to the utmost verges that ever his feet had trod,
And still find far beyond them the world of the Heaven of God ?

IX

Yet perchance, as he gazed around him, a tear of regret might rise,
And blot for a passing moment all else but earth from his eyes :
He would murmur, O God I know thee in the least of thy works complete :
It is all as of old I left it, and then it was oh ! how sweet.

THOU nameless meeting of two nameless streams—
  Sweet haunt—familiar to my wandering feet—
So well beloved, that in my very dreams
    Thy murmuring waters meet.

My heart is weary of the ways of men :
  Fain would I set the busy world aside,
And seek thy solitary paths again,
    And hear thy wavelets glide.

Lo ! I am with thee : though yon purple height
  Still stands between, and thou art far beyond,
Yet thou dost ever come to bless my sight
    When fancy waves her wand.

I close my eyes, and out of empty space
  I bid them rise, obedient to my will,
The many blended features of thy face—
    Mist, moorland, stream and hill.—

Above—the bluffs of bracken and of rock,
  Where desolation has its own sweet charm ;—
The scanty pasture,—the wide-wandering flock,—
    The last lone upland farm.

Below—the broken boulders and the maze
  Of waters half bewildered, half in haste,
That wind and wander by so many ways,
    Threading thy rocky waste.

PART IV ii

And the grey causeway through the river's bed,
So rudely shaped that I have deemed it strewn
By Nature's artless hand,—in turn I tread
Each wave-worn stepping-stone.

And the wide wilderness of moors around,
The russet grass, the fringe of stunted fir,
The ever-wakeful wind's mysterious sound,
The moorcock's rushing whirr.

I know them all, and wander, not astray,
With tender recollection for my guide,
By every devious heather-hidden way
That leads me to thy side.

For who shall tell how often I pursued
My wonted paths to thee, till time had taught
My heart to know thee in each change of mood
That changing Nature wrought ?

I know that season when the tender haze
Of verdure, stealing through the stunted trees,
Tells me that winter dreams of summer days,
Sunshine and balmy breeze.

And when the summer comes with skies of blue
And purple twilights lingering in the west,
I've stood and watched the clouds of rosy hue
That slumbered on thy breast.

And when the rain-clouds from the south-west blacken
  The lower heaven, and mists of autumn rise,
I've seen the glories of thy faded bracken
    Atone for faded skies.

Nor least I love thee when the untrodden snow
  Enshrouds the moorlands in their swoon of death,
And bleak and bitter are the winds that blow,
    With winter in their breath.

Nay more—I love thy solitude so well,
  That not to thee alone I wont to make
My pilgrimage, but every clough and fell
    Is sacred for thy sake.

Thou lesser stream, whose infant life is fed
  On western slopes, confess that I have traced
Thy windings back to where a verdurous thread
    Streaks the brown upland waste.

And thou fair child of dew and cloud and rain,
  What though thy valley is a dreamland still,
Yet chide me not—I tremble to profane
    The fancy-haunted hill,

That hallowed spot where moorland mist conceals
  The lonely nymph that holds thy fountain urn,
And ever bending o'er thy cradle kneels,
    Waist-deep in heath and fern.

PART IV ii

And I have tracked the mingled streams below
Through one deep gorge of wood and crag and heath,
And heard the waves with murmured music flow
Invisible beneath.

Why do I love thee so ? What magic spell,
What subtle charm has thus enthralled my heart ?
I know not—'tis enough that I love well
Thee, whatsoe'er thou art.

Love cares but little how or whence he came—
In what an hour—from what sufficient source :—
His only warrant is his own pure flame—
His calm and constant course.

I have seen stately rivers roll the snow
Of mighty mountains through a boundless plain,
And blend in one their ample floods and flow
Broad-bosomed to the main.

I have seen streams that wandered murmuring down
Deep dales in many-tinted verdure drest,
Mingle with melody their waters brown
By bending branches blest.

I have seen mountain torrents held asunder
In lonely chasms, leap quivering with the shock
Into one dark abyss of foam and thunder,
Through gates of dungeon rock.

Fair nymphs are those whose queenly locks are wound
With garland rare or pearl-inwoven wreath,—
But fairer far thy simple tresses bound
With spray of russet heath.

And still each pious pilgrimage reveals
Thee in thy wonted beauty—fresh as fair—
Fresh as the breath of spring-time when it heals
The earth of her despair.

And still I learn of thee, and still renew
The thrill of peace that erst thy message gave,
That there are rifts of pure ethereal blue,
Though blinding tempests rave.

I learn of thee that there are isles of palm
Sown in the weariest waste of burning sand,
And dews of twilight falling fresh and calm
To bless the thirstiest land.

I learn of thee that nature yet doth keep
Some secret havens of unrippled rest,
Where rise and sink in rhythmic accents deep
The pulses of her breast.

And still, when winds awake and billows beat,
I go to thee—blest haven that thou art—
And in thy solitude hold converse sweet
With Nature—heart to heart.

I

PART IV THE clouds were light and fleecy: the sky was
iii bright and blue:
And over the purple heather the wild wind laughed
and flew:
And over the rushy grasses, and over the withered fern,
And down to the wooded dingle that winds with the
winding burn.

II

It laughed through the leaves of autumn, russet and
gold and brown:
And the boughs were bent and shaken, and the dead
leaves fluttered down.
The foam of the leaping brooklet was whirled in a
mist away:
The tarn on the lonely moorlands was blue as a
summer's day.

III

Unseen was the sheltered valley where the busy river
flows:
Line beyond line of purple dim into distance rose:
But never a sound was wafted, and never a wreath of
smoke,
And only the shivering rushes, and only the wild winds
spoke.

IV

Alone on the lonely heather—far, far from the life of men,
I lived—I had long been dreaming—alone—but I lived again :
Pure as a child I wandered—free as a careless boy,
And the wind breathed through my spirit, and life was a throb of joy.

V

I lived in the moors around me : I lived in the bright blue sky :
I lived in the rushing freedom of the wind that swept me by :
And oh ! when the grasses shivered, I lived in the loving kiss,
In the touch divine of sadness, the bloom of the flower of bliss.

VI

Dark clouds came over the heaven : grey mists crept over the moors :
For the face of Nature changes, but the life of the soul endures ;
And wind, and heather, and sunlight, that sleep in their wintry grave,
Are part of the soul they quickened, and live in the life they gave.

PART IV
iv

WILD in your wonderful wailing—
Winds of despair !
Winds of the waste and the darkness !
Fiends of the air !
Come from your haunts—from the moorlands
Lonely and bare.

Deathlike and weird was the slumber
Till you wandered by—
First a faint breath, then a shiver—
A mutter—a sigh—
A moan—a wail lost in the midnight—
An agonized cry.

Children of dark desolation !
I am alone :
All the great storm of your being
Breathes through my own—
Earth-shaking hurricane thunder—
Faint far-off moan.

Eddy on eddy of madness !
Frenzied and fast—
How the grim ghosts of the forest
Shook as each past—
Shook till their leaves dead and dying
Went with the blast.

Borne on its bosom, my fancy
Follows its flight—
Out of the forest abysses—
On through the night—
On to the shore where the reef rocks
Are streaming and white.

Follows it driving the ridges
Of darkness and doom—
Sees the white foam of their surges
Flash through the gloom—
Hears how the shriek of the hell-wind
Pierces their boom.

Now the wind droops : it is weary—
Worn with its play—
Weary of whirling the dead leaves—
Flinging the spray :
Only a wail, faint and failing,
Dies far away.

Hark ! that far infinite moaning
Rises again—
Rises and rushes and rages
In volleys of rain,—
Hark ! what a triumph of anguish,
Rapture of pain.

Yes—'twas our hearts that were speaking
To forest and shore—
Driving with eddies of laughter
Storm-clouds before—
Strong in the pride of the hidden
Scars that they bore.

Finding their fierce inspiration
Deep in their throes—
Still through their torrents of thunder
Moaning their woes—
Moaning the wound of whose bleeding
None ever knows.

What if my soul has its passions
Wayward and wild,
Chide not their whirlwinds O mother,
Mighty as mild;
Thine is the midnight autumnal:
I am thy child.

BUT mists grew round us even as we spake—
  Impenetrable mists of ghostly white,
  That hid the darkness and the stars of night,
And hid the slumber of the glimmering lake,
And the dark cliffs that circle it and break
  The might of storm and sun—and hid the snow,
  And frozen steps imprinted deep to show
The perilous pathway that our feet must take.
So wrapped in mist we climbed forlorn of hope,
  Forgetful of the prize that our desire
    Had painted in its dreams—night's veil withdrawn,
And, from the summit of the weary slope,
  Sea, hill and plain—a waking world afire
    With the first rosy shimmer of the dawn.

Then came the rushing of a sudden blast—
  A bitter nightwind, from whose icy breath
  Even the mists, chilly and damp as death,
Shivered and shrank affrighted—fierce and fast
Into the void of air their billows passed,
  Rolled by the fury of the whirling wind—
  And for a moment all the heights behind
Stood forth supremely—manifest at last—
The kingly mountain in its robe of white
  Wildly awoken from its misty swoon—
    The pillars that uplift its dome on high—
Its lonely precipices black as night
  Against the lamp of the new-risen moon,
    And stars and darkness of the unclouded sky.

PART IV And then the mists grew round us, as before,
v And knee-deep in the snow we struggled on
With blinded eyes : but ever and anon,
For one such mighty moment and no more,
Came such a shiver of the wind and tore
Aside the veil that hid the mountain's face,
And shewed the white mists wreathing round the base
Of its dark dripping buttresses, and bore
Their boiling waves with stormy speed along :—
O lost and found ! O mountain, lake and sky !
O sudden revelation ! swift eclipse !
Marvellous moments, that my accents wrong !
Forgive ! My passionate recollections die
Even on the threshold of my faltering lips.

There passed a time, and we had won the height :
Bitter and bleak the breath of twilight blew,
Visible in the mist, that ever grew
More wan and cold : the darkness of the night
Slowly became a pale and lifeless light,
That touched with frosty red each orient cloud :—
And ever, as the circling mists allowed,
A wilderness of mountains filled the sight—
Black island masses, round whose shores were tost
Billows of vapour—surgings of a sea :—
While to the west, in one vast crescent sweep,
Ran fifty leagues of dimly outlined coast,
Whose rocky headlands murmured voicelessly
The white-lipped moanings of the eternal deep.

I

I SAT by the scarlet poppies near the sands of the
sunken shore :
The hedges rustled above me as the warm wind
wandered o'er :
I heard it speak to the cornfields—I heard it speak
to the sea :—
Had it no message, I wondered—nothing to whisper
to me ?

II

It passed from the brimming Humber to the waves
that died at my feet,
O'er the land of bearded barley, deep meadow and
yellow wheat :
Blue was the Northern Ocean, blue was the summer
sky,
And all things laughed for gladness as the wind went
fluttering by.

III

I marked by the rushing ripples its path through the
golden grain :
Gay wavelets danced before it over the sunlit main :
What were the words it whispered as it kissed the
ocean spray ?
Tell me, O bending corn-fields, what did the soft
wind say ?

IV

The wheat and the poppies answered : It whispered of sunny mirth,
Of the wealth of the coming harvest, of the gifts of the goodly earth :
Its breath was the blended odour of fruit, and flower, and corn,—
Pure as the noon-day Heaven, fresh as the early morn.

V

But the great blue sea made answer : It came from the laughing land ;—
It breathed of joy as it hurried over the glistening sand :
But its gladness grew to yearning as it sank on my boundless breast,
And it wandered away for ever and could not find its nest.

VI

It could not find its haven : it drooped and it yearned to die :
The voice of its noon-day laughter was hushed in a weary sigh :
It sighed, O joy and sunshine, I fathomed your deepest deep,
And depths were still beneath it—it sighed—and it fell asleep.

I

TELL me, O Sea, thy secret; speak to me, soul to soul:
I hear the boom of thy billows; I see them surge and roll:
There is something that they are saying as they break on the foaming beach;
Something that they would tell me if I could but learn their speech.

II

They come like a trampling army from some fateful far-off land:
They storm with unwearied onsets the ramparts of rock and sand:
Wave after wave, they perish. Is their travail void and vain?
What realm do they strive to conquer? What crown do they strive to gain?

III

Afar in the misty distance, where loom like ghostly shapes,
Out of the clouds that haunt them, the giant headland capes,
As I trace the land's dim outline by the fringe of thy foaming snow,
I think, do the dark cliffs listen to the surf that breaks below?

IV

I have seen thee, O Sea, in summer, when thy waves were all asleep,
And the blue of the sky above thee was matched by thine azure deep :
What spell had bound thy waters ? What charm had hushed their strife ?
What dream, what vision of glory, had tranced thy mighty life ?

V

And in the wintry season, O dark tempestuous Sea !
When storm-clouds hid the heavens, and the wild winds wandered free,—
I have seen thy terrible surges scourging the streaming reefs,
And caught in their echoed thunder the plaint of thy voiceless griefs.

VI

On gusty days, far inland, borne by the rushing blast,
The flakes of thy foam have met me, and kissed me as they passed :
And as I drank enraptured the breath of the spraying brine,
Thy mystic message thrilled me, but I could not make it mine.

VII

When the sun is slowly sinking, and the world grows wildly bright,
And sea and sky are mingled in a mist of crimson light,
Vainly my soul has striven, through the gates of the glowing West,
To win the golden shore-line of thine Islands of the Blest.

VIII

Or when, full-orbed and lustrous, the moon is throned on high,
And paths of gleaming silver across thy ripples lie,
Though soft as a dying zephyr the breeze of midnight blows,
More passionate far than passion is thy deep divine repose.

. . . . . .

IX

Oh, there's a life profounder than the life that we deem our own :
There are words that are never spoken, and thoughts that are never known ;
And secret gusts of passion, and wild far-wandering dreams ;
And sudden spectral shadows, and swift mysterious gleams.

X

PART IV vii What do they mean ? We know not. Why do they come and go ?
Where is the fount that feeds them ? Whence do their storm-winds blow ?
Vain thoughts ! With cant and custom the world still walls us in ;
And we may not guess what passes in the hidden depths within.

XI

Yet at times, for timeless moments, there come to all and each
Flashes of sudden splendour, yearnings that crave for speech :
But swift as the light that dazzles is its cruel dark eclipse ;
And the soul's unspoken message dies on our faltering lips.

XII

Dies ! Will it ne'er be spoken ? O vast encircling Sea !
Thine is the voice eternal of the life that is dumb in me :
I hear in thy surging thunder the sound of my soul's unrest ;
And thy fathomless depths of silence are the dream-deep life of my breast.

XIII

Murmur, O Sea, thy message; speak to me, deep
to deep:
We are swept by the same fierce passions; we sleep
the same moonlit sleep:
For I think that thy restless waters through the gulfs
of my life have rolled;
And I think that my heart has suffered whatever thy
waves have told.

XIV

Speak to me, spirit to spirit: thou art more than
symbol or sign;
For thine are the very pulses of the life that is lost in
mine:
From afar, from the soul's expanses, the winds have
wafted thy breath;
And thy murmuring surges whisper of the infinite
deeps of death.

PART V. SONNETS
TO THE UNIVERSE

PART V i. ii

I KNOW not, care not, how you came to be;
Nor why you toil; nor to what end you move.
It is enough that in the heart of me
You are a lamp of light, a flame of love.
It is enough for me that for my sake
Your springs of life are ceaselessly renewed.
It is enough that in each breath I take
I am sustained by your infinitude.
It is enough that because you are you
I am whate'er I am; that you, the Whole,
For ever and for ever streaming through
The channel of my being, are my soul.
You are the riddle which will ne'er be guessed.
You are the answer hidden in my breast.

MANY are your disguises. 'Tis in vain
We seek to bind you in our forms of thought.
You change from sea to cloud, from cloud to rain.
Your One is manifold. Your All is nought.
Smiling assent, you cancel Yes with No.
Matching our moods, you baffle our pursuit.
Pageant, or panorama. Ceaseless flow
Of changeful Life, or changeless Absolute.
For sense-bound reason you are dumb and blind,
Lifeless and soulless, dead though infinite:
And you are Truth for the adventurous mind:
And Beauty for the spirit's inward sight.
For wondering awe you are the Stars above:
And for the heart that loves you, you are Love.

THERE is a barrier 'twixt your soul and mine.
We call it Self. It is of vampire breed.
Our life-blood is its sacramental wine.
It seeks its own with fierce, insatiate greed.
It is a quicksand, in its treacherous deeps
Engulfing all who heedless wander near.
It is a whirlpool, in whose eddying sweeps
All things that drift are caught and disappear.
It is a siren, with seductive wile
Luring the soul to shipwreck and to death.
It is a serpent, hissing words of guile,
A sting of poison in its every breath.
This is the self, to which my soul must die,
If it would live to your eternity.

THEY tell us that the mighty banyan-tree,
Itself a forest, has a speck-like seed,
In which it hides its life's totality,
A spell-bound prisoner, waiting to be freed.
So do you hide your Self—the One, the All—
In this my heart, this seed which you have sown ;
Waiting to wake from slumber at my call,
Waiting for me to claim you as my own.
Patient you wait. Shall I with stubborn will
Rest in myself, content with what is mine ?
Or, with high purpose, labour to fulfil,
Dying to self, my fate and your design ?
Nay, but who dies to self doth self renew ;
For I am I only when one with you.

MEN ask what I believe. I cannot say.
Faith is the other self of deep desire.
Faith is a flood which sweeps all forms away,—
The flaming outrush of an inward fire.
Men ask what I believe. I cannot guess.
I love you with my heart, my mind, my soul.
This is my creed. What more can I confess ?
Love baffles speech, and breaks from thought's control.
Men ask if I am happy ? Have I found
Safe anchorage in life's uncharted sea ?
Nay, I am on a voyage. I am bound
For seas and lands unknown. I wander free.
I find life's treasure in this endless quest,
And peace of mind in infinite unrest.

WHAT do I seek ? What does my soul desire ?
To give desire a fuller, freer scope :
To make intenser its intensest fire :
To pass beyond the horizon of its hope.
What vision lures me on ? What dream sustains ?
No prize of victory. No garnered fruit.
I reap my harvest in my wounds, my pains,
The stress of strife, the ardour of pursuit.
Why do I strive ? That I may strive the more.
Why do I toil ? Not for life's daily bread.
Why do I climb ? That I may learn to soar.
Success, achievement is the doom I dread.
Have I succeeded ? One reward I claim—
A task beyond my compass and my aim.

EPILOGUE
THE CREED OF MY HEART

I

EPILOGUE

THE night was heavy with sorrow : I heard the plash of its tears :
I caught the breath of its sighing : I felt the gloom of its fears.

. . . . . .

II

The storm has died into silence ; but its voice is awake in my soul ;
And through me, in sad procession, the plaints of its anguish roll :
Why do we strive and suffer ? Why do we work and weep ?
We live, and our days are numbered. We die, and dark is our sleep.
Who reaps the fruit of our travail ? Who gains the meed of our toil ?
For whom do we drive life's furrow ? For whom do we sow life's soil ?
Or is Chance the ruler of Chaos ? Are we duped by our heart's fond dreams ?
Is it false that a Will has framed us ? Is it false that a Love redeems ?
Are we born of the clash of atoms ? Do we pass into dust and clay ?
Though the years of a man be sunshine, is darkness the end of day ?

III

From the gloom of the night no answer is borne to my doubting heart ; EPI-LOGUE
But the breath of the morn is wafting the clouds of the night apart,—
The herald breath of the morning, light-winged and wandering wide,
The first low tremulous whisper of the day's advancing tide.

IV

Slowly the West grows purple ; slowly by hands unseen
The fringe of the East is broidered with coral and gold and green.
Though deep in the valley linger the phantom shadows of night,
From summit to summit flushes the dawn's ineffable light,—
The dawn's ineffable glory, the pure pale roseate glow
That lights with fugitive splendour the death-cold wastes of snow.
White mists float up from the meadows : faint murmurs, borne by the breeze,
Rise from the gliding river, fall from the rustling trees.
All else is enthralled by silence, a silence deeper than song,
A silence of expectation, a silence eager and strong.
The season of sadness is over, the season of tears and sighs :

There is joy in the breath of Nature, and the light of hope in her eyes.
A sense of exultant longing possesses the watchful earth,
As the flush of the morning heralds the sun's predestined birth.

V

A flame in my heart is kindled by the might of the morn's pure breath ;
A passion beyond all passion ; a faith that eclipses faith ;
A joy that is more than gladness ; a hope that outsoars desire ;
A love that consumes and quickens ; a soul-transfiguring fire.
My life is possessed and mastered : my heart is inspired and filled.
All other visions have faded : all other voices are stilled.
My doubts are vainer than shadows : my fears are idler than dreams :
They vanish like breaking bubbles, those old soul-torturing themes.
The riddles of life are cancelled, the problems that bred despair :
I cannot guess them or solve them, but I know that they are not there.
They are past, they are all forgotten, the breeze has blown them away ;

For life's inscrutable meaning is clear as the dawn of day.
It is there—the secret of Nature—there in the morning's glow;
There in the speaking stillness; there in the rose-flushed snow.
It is here in the joy and rapture; here in my pulsing breast:—
I feel what has ne'er been spoken: I know what has ne'er been guessed.

VI

The rose-lit clouds of morning; the sun-kissed mountain heights;
The orient streaks and flushes; the mingling shadows and lights;
The flow of the lonely river; the voice of its distant stream;
The mists that rise from the meadows, lit up by the sun's first beam;—
They mingle and melt as I watch them; melt and mingle and die.
The land is one with the water: the earth is one with the sky.
The parts are as parts no longer: Nature is All and One:
Her life is achieved, completed: her days of waiting are done.

EPILOGUE

I breathe the breath of the morning. I am one with the one World-Soul.
I live my own life no longer, but the life of the living Whole.
I am more than self : I am selfless : I am more than self : I am I.
I have found the springs of my being in the flush of the eastern sky.
I—the true self, the spirit, the self that is born of death—
I have found the flame of my being in the morn's ambrosial breath.
I lose my life for a season : I lose it beyond recall :
But I find it renewed, rekindled, in the life of the One, the All.
I look not forward or backward : the abysses of time are nought.
From pole to pole of the heavens I pass in a flash of thought.
I clasp the world to my bosom : I feel its pulse in my breast,—
The pulse of measureless motion, the pulse of fathomless rest.
Is it motion or rest that thrills me ? Is it lightning or moonlit peace ?
Am I freer than waves of ether, or prisoned beyond release ?
I know not ; but through my spirit, within me, around, above,

The world-wide river is streaming, the river of life and love.
Silent, serene, eternal, passionless, perfect, pure ;—
I may not measure its windings, but I know that its aim is sure.
In its purity seethes all passion : in its silence resounds all song :
Its strength is builded of weakness : its right is woven of wrong.
I am borne afar on its bosom ; yet its source and its goal are mine,
From the sacred springs of Creation to the ocean of love Divine.
I have ceased to think or to reason : there is nothing to ponder or prove :
I hope, I believe no longer : I am lost in a dream of love.

VIII

O soul of the soul of Nature ! O life of her inmost life !
The saints of the earth have sought thee with toil and sorrow and strife.
O only well-spring of being ! O only fountain of force !
The wise of the earth have laboured to trace thy stream to its source.
O circle that art all centre ! O world-deep infinite Whole !
For one mysterious moment thy face hath flashed on my soul :—

EPILOGUE

A moment that is no moment, a timeless atom of time;
For the spell of the dawn is over, and the sun has begun to climb :—
But the moment is mine for ever, it lives and works in my heart :
Though thy face be veiled by its splendour, I have seen thee, O God, as thou art.
In that thrill of wonder and glory thy message came from afar,
As light is flashed through the ages from a bright, invisible star.
With high imperial summons thy voice hath rung in my ears :
I go ; for thy love hath called me from beyond the encircling years.
I go ; for thy love constrains me ; I feel the stress of its might :
It draws me inward and upward with chains of ethereal light.
I have come from thee—when I know not—like mist from the ocean's breast ;
But the mist shall feed the river, and the river at last find rest.
I wander afar in exile, a wave-born flake of foam ;
But the wheel must "come full circle," and the wanderer wander home.
I have come from thee,—why I know not ; but thou art, O God ! what thou art ;

And the round of eternal being is the pulse of thy beating heart.
Thou hast need of thy meanest creature; thou hast need of what once was thine:
The thirst that consumes my spirit is the thirst of thy heart for mine.
What though with will rebellious I thwart thy omnipotent will,
Through purgatorial æons thy spirit will draw me still;
Draw me through shame and sorrow and pain and death and decay;
Draw me from Hell to Heaven, draw me from night to day;
Draw me from self's abysses to the selfless azure above;
Draw me to thee, Life's Fountain, with patient passionate love.

IX

Shall I fear to be lost for ever—a drop in thy shoreless sea?
Does the heart-sick fear to be happy? Does the captive fear to be free?
Did I fear, when the flame-flushed summits had caught the glow of thy grace?
Did I fear, in that mystic moment, the thrill of thy heart's embrace?
Shall I fear when my life is buried 'neath the surges of life Divine,
In the ocean depths of thy spirit to find what is real in mine?

Shall I fear to unseal the fountain whence all things beautiful came ?
Shall I fear to be rapt and ravished by love's all-conquering flame ?

. . . . . .

x

The sun is high in the heaven : the flush has faded away :
But my heart is aflame for ever with the dawn of a larger day.
Let the years bring joy or sorrow : let Fate send glory or gloom :
I fear no shadow of darkness : I fear no presage of doom.
I have guessed the secret of being : I have probed the meaning of death :
I know why we wake from slumber : I know why we draw life's breath.
I have read the riddle of evil,—the riddle of passion and pain :
I know that no heart has striven or sighed or suffered in vain.
I am clasped to the breast of Nature : I glide where her waters glide :
And I feel, as each ripple rocks me, the swing of the world's one tide.

. . . . . .

XI

The sun has climbed to the zenith, but his light has
died from the skies :
There is fear at the heart of Nature, and a mist of
tears in her eyes :
Dark as despair the storm-clouds in sad procession
move :—
But my heart is aflame for ever with the dawn of the
light of love.

EPODE
THE ATLANTIC MAIN

I

EPODE TWO walls of precipices black and steep,
The storm-lashed ramparts of a naked land,
Are parted here by leagues of lonely sand
That make a bay ; and up it ever creep
Billowy ocean ripples half asleep,
That cast a belt of foam along the strand,
Seething and white, and wake in cadence grand
The everlasting thunder of the deep.
And there is never silence on that shore :—
Alike in storm and calm foam-fringes gird
Its desolation, and the Atlantic's roar
Makes mighty music. Though the sea be stirred
By scarce a breath of breeze, yet evermore
The sands are whitened, and the thunder heard.

II

I once did wander on a misty day
In solitary mood along the verge
Of those dark cliffs that hear the mournful dirge
Of billows breaking in Intrinsic Bay :
Far, far below rose sheets of blinding spray
Flung from the waves that ceaselessly submerge
The fallen fragments of the cliffs, and surge,
And foam, and boil, and then are sucked away.
White sea-mists hid the waters waste and wide :
The winds were hushed, yet broke eternally
The melancholy thunder of the sea,
That voice of solitude : companionless
I wandered on : there reigned on every side
The majesty of utter loneliness.

III

A sheer surf-beaten island fronts the shore, EPODE
  Close to the headland cliffs, whence stormy waves
  Have rent it : there the sea imprisoned raves
Between dark dungeon walls, and evermore
Deep in that chasm, with sullen booming roar,
  Comes surging in a rushing raging tide,
  That pants and boils, and climbs each dripping side,
Then sinks as madly as it rose before.
Beyond, bright crests of ocean waves are tost
  Into the far faint haze that ends the view :
Northward, the headlands of a rocky coast
  Are white with surf—while southward, broad and blue,
The Shannon rolls, in tranquil majesty,
Into the billows of the boundless sea.

IV

Across the heaving ocean's billowy flow,
  Lie paths of gold that deepen into red :
  The west is bright : black storm-clouds overhead
Give a strange sweetness to the evening glow.
The swell of the Atlantic breaks below
  With thunderous resonance : long lines of white
  Tell where the iron coast beats back the might
Of stormy seas :—dark headlands fringed with snow—
From blue Loophead to Arran's sunken strand—
  Deep gloomy precipice-encircled bays,
Sheer craggy islets, flats of whitened sand,
  Are all scarce dimmed by veils of purpling haze :
While somewhere in the glory of the west
Lie the enchanted Islands of the Blest.

ENVOI

ENVOI SINK down, O sun ! in throbbing mists of gold—
Bid earth melt into Heaven beneath thy rays—
Veil the far mountains with thy violet haze,
And in the mantle of thy glory fold
Me, too, for I am cast in Nature's mould
Even as these : thy floods of living light,
Thy purple waves mysteriously bright
Beat through my breast in ecstasy untold :
Ay and in me thy showers of stormlight flow
From clouds of flame : mine, too, the after doom
Of more than mortal beauty—mine the woe
That wakes to being in the very womb
Of kindled rapture : mine the dying glow,
The dusk of twilight and the gathering gloom.

EXPLICIT

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